

May 16, 2008

Dear Friends:

The inauguration of the One Laptop per Child/South Carolina pilot project in [Marion School District Seven](#) earlier this week is a perfect example of the kinds of innovative ideas that we must put into motion to help improve student achievement in South Carolina. It also exemplifies the kinds of public/private partnerships that can bring new resources into public education in this time of uncertain, and now shrinking, government funding.

The pilot's successful launch was made possible thanks to the [Palmetto Project](#). Charleston entrepreneur Phil Noble, a former executive director of that organization, worked hard to bring the One Laptop per Child concept to our state. And we're especially grateful for the two individuals who funded this pilot — Erwin Maddrey of Greenville and Linda Ketner of Charleston.

[One Laptop per Child/South Carolina](#) incorporates many of the key elements of the innovation reforms we outlined at the beginning of our school improvement efforts. These elements are:

- Innovation must be focused on student achievement because that's the core business of our public schools.
- Innovation must be sustainable beyond the implementation stage. Given the durability and economical cost of the XO laptops in this project, that's certainly the case.
- Innovation must be disseminated. Our hope — indeed, our expectation — is that One Laptop per Child/South Carolina will be replicated in communities and school districts all across South Carolina.
- Innovation must be collaborative, with many partners working together toward a common goal. Our partner in this program, the Palmetto Project, has a 25-year history of applying innovation toward problem solving.
- Innovation is not optional, because educating children to a high standard can no longer be optional. The need for a higher standard is readily evident considering the global society in which we function, both now and in the future.

Students at the two pilot schools — [Britton's Neck Elementary](#) and [Rains Centenary Early Childhood Center](#) — will continue their education, choose their careers and rear their families in a world where their ability to acquire, manipulate and apply knowledge will far surpass any of the experiences we baby boomers had in our formative years. Will they be ready for success? Will they be able to demonstrate competence? Will the skills they acquire in Marion Seven's schools equip them for learning at all stages of life?

I believe the answer will be "yes" because of One Laptop per Child/South Carolina. I am eager to see how this great leap forward will make its way into other classrooms in other schools, perhaps beginning expansion within the next ninety days. When it comes to our children's future, we have no time to waste!

Sincerely,

Jim Rex  
State Superintendent of Education

<http://www.marion7.k12.sc.us/education/district/district.php?sectionid=1>

<http://www.palmettoproject.org/>

<http://www.ed.sc.gov/news/more.cfm?articleID=979>

<http://www.marion7.k12.sc.us/education/school/school.php?sectionid=3>

<http://www.marion7.k12.sc.us/education/school/school.php?sectionid=4>